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THE REPLY

OF

THE GUARDIANS

FOR THE RELIEF AND EMPLOYMENT OF THE POOR OF THE CITY OF  
PHILADELPHIA, THE DISTRICT OF SOUTHWARK, AND THE  
TOWNSHIPS OF THE NORTHERN LIBERTIES AND PENN,

TO CERTAIN REMARKS

MADE IN THEIR PRESENTMENTS

BY THE

GRAND INQUESTS

INQUIRING FOR THE COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA

FOR

FEBRUARY AND APRIL SESSIONS

1849.

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PHILADELPHIA:

CRISSY & MARKLEY, PRINTERS, NO. 4 MINOR STREET.

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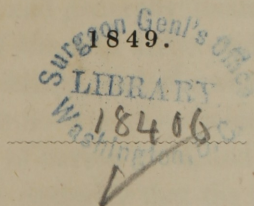
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THE BIBLE

The Bible is a collection of sacred texts that are central to the faith of Christians. It is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains the laws and stories of the Hebrew people, while the New Testament contains the teachings and life of Jesus Christ. The Bible is written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and has been translated into many languages. It is a source of spiritual guidance and inspiration for millions of people around the world.



## TO THE PUBLIC.

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The presentments of the two last Grand Juries, inquiring for the County of Philadelphia, contain censures upon the management of the institution under the charge of the Guardians of the Poor. The repetition of these censures, their nature, and the official position of the bodies from which they emanate, require that the Guardians, in justice to themselves and the community which they for certain purposes represent, should shew that these censures are entirely destitute of either cause or truth.

The Grand Jury for April Sessions in their presentment say:—

“The Hospital Building, erected with especial regard to the necessities of the sick, with airy and pleasant apartments, opening on a cheerful garden, has been converted into a receptacle for a comparatively small number of idiots, and generally incurable lunatics, while the great mass of the sick are crowded into apartments in the factory buildings, and elsewhere. None of these rooms on the first floor have sufficient ventilation, opening on a few feet of barren yard, and a blank high wall.”

“It is certainly desirable that the insane should have every necessary comfort and accommodation, but not at the expense of human life, and the sacrifice of the original intention of the Institution.”

This language distinctly charges that the patients in the lunatic asylum are comparatively a small number, only *one-thirtieth* of that of the sick,—that for the accommodation of the former, the latter have been removed from their airy and pleasant apartments, and *crowded* into other places, and that the change has been made at the expense of human life. The Guardians in refutation of these allegations, and without commenting on the reckless ignorance or active malevolence which alone could have prompted them, submit a few facts. In the first place, the number of persons of unsound mind in the lunatic department, instead of being small in comparison with that of those in the hospital—instead of being but *one-thirtieth*, as averred in the presentment, is in fact greater,—the number in the insane department being 390, while that in the hospital is 349.

In the next place these 349, or whatever number may at any time require medical or surgical attendance, instead of being *crowded*, as the presentment alleges, by the change of their apartments, have had their accommodations extended and their means of comfort proportionably increased. In the building formerly occupied by the sick there were

12 Wards, each 44 feet by 40, or 1,760 square feet	
each, containing - - - - -	228 beds,
6 Wards, each 22 feet by 40, or 880 square	
feet each, containing - - - - -	56 “
	<hr/>
	284 “
One attic, - - - - -	40 “
	<hr/>
	324 “
	<hr/>



The present Hospital consists of

11	Wards, each 47 feet by 44, or 2,068 square feet	
	each, containing - - - - -	220 beds,
9	Wards, each 47 feet by 22, or 1,034 square	
	feet each, containing - - - - -	90 “
6	Wards, each 32 feet by 25, or 800 square	
	feet each, containing - - - - -	42 “
		<hr/>
		352 “
	Two attics, - - - - -	80 “
		<hr/>
		432 “
		<hr/>

Thus, in the opinion of the Grand Jury, the patients were amply accommodated in the old hospital, where in the wards less than 93 square feet was allowed to each bed; but are crowded at the expense of human life in the new hospital, where more than 104 feet is allowed for the same purpose.

The classification of the insane was not the only object proposed to be accomplished by this change, the proper treatment of the patients also required it. Before any change had been effected, the building used as a hospital for the sick, from the increase of the patients, had become inadequate for the purpose, and from a necessity which was regularly increasing, other and better accommodation for them had to be provided.

To effect this, either the interior of the large buildings forming the wings of the old hospital, which had been arranged at a heavy expense for the use of the lunatics, must have been entirely remodelled to fit them for the sick, and other and costly arrangements made

elsewhere for the lunatics, or the present more economical, and in all respects more suitable plan, adopted. It appears from the statement before given, that by the change of the hospital for the sick the Guardians have been enabled to increase the number of the beds precisely one-third, and have effected this not by the sacrifice of space or room, but on the contrary have greatly increased it. It will be perceived that the wards in the old hospital contained but 26,300 square feet, while the wards in the new one have 36,854 square feet. The present hospital, in addition to the wards and attics, has 16 rooms, 32 feet by 13 feet, used as operating rooms, nurses rooms, bath rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, &c. The former and present hospitals are parallel to each other, forming the opposite sides of a hollow square, and consequently have the same exposures. The second and third stories are very pleasant and airy, and command a fine view of the City. The ventilation of the first floor is little if at all obstructed by the wall enclosing the yard. The removal, however, of the sick and the dying from their former quarters, where they were in the immediate proximity to raving maniacs, whose howls and screams rang in their ears by night and by day, more than compensates for minor inconveniences, even if such do exist. That this change complained of has been made "at the expense of human life," or even of discomfort or inconvenience of the paupers is, therefore, utterly untrue.

The Guardians cannot forbear expressing their deep regret that men, acting under the responsibilities of their oaths and affirmations, should have been induced by any influence to make representations so evidently ground-



less, that even the slight opportunity afforded by their short visit, if properly improved, would have prevented them from making.

Although not directly required by any remarks of either of the Grand Juries, it may be well, as explanatory of the difficulties which the Board has had to encounter, and of the probable influences which have produced these presentments, to refer briefly to the history of the Lunatic Asylum. The buildings originally intended for lunatics were constructed upon plans adopted by Commissioners appointed for the purpose, and approved of by the then existing Board of Guardians. In those days it seems to have been considered that humanity discharged the whole of her duty to these, the most unfortunate of her family, when she prevented them from inflicting injury upon themselves or others, and cells, high walls, straight jackets, tranquillizing chairs, ring-bolts, fetters and manacles, were the favorite preventatives. With these views, and having reference to the number of this class, then a charge upon the public, the commissioners no doubt thought they made sufficient provision when they caused one hundred and twenty cells to be constructed for their accommodation. In 1834, when the cells were first occupied, there were ninety-two persons to become inmates of them. But when more correct and benevolent views of their condition and their demands upon society prevailed, when it became more generally understood that no matter to what extent they were bereft of reason, that they were neither wild beasts to be caged nor felons to be chained, but human beings, having claims upon our sympathy and care in proportion to their afflictions, susceptible of

treatment and not unfrequently of cure; then the apartments provided were found entirely inadequate.

The number of these patients since 1834, has been constantly, greatly, and even fearfully increasing. In 1834 the number of new admissions was 68, in 1841, seven years afterwards, the number had increased to 202, and in 1848, after another period of seven years, the new admissions amounted to 287. On the 16th July, 1834, when the asylum was opened for their reception, the number under care or treatment was 92; on the first day of January last, it was 375. It is therefore obvious that the limited buildings constructed upon the principle designated were not merely useless, but positively injurious. This great number until recently were from necessity thrown together, without regard to the peculiar character or producing cause of their fearful malady, the raging maniac with the weak-minded and partially insane, the confirmed and incurable, with the recent and perhaps temporary deranged. Any attempt at classification was defied, treatment was hopeless and cure impossible. In reference to these evils the Grand Inquest for March, 1845, say: "The system is a dreadful one, and a brief residence among the uncontrollably mad may alone suffice, sympathetically or from fear, to establish forever the disorder in one who differently situated might be restored to health and reason." Thus this and other Grand Juries in 1845, and earlier were earnestly pressing the changes that a Grand Jury in 1849 has thought proper to condemn.

The Guardians, however, needed not the promptings of a Grand Jury. They had seen and deplored these evils, but there were difficulties to encounter and obsta-



cles to be overcome before a remedy at all commensurate with the necessities of the case could be carried into execution. The opposition of some, who were slow to believe that a mind diseased could be administered to, or that a disordered intellect might be restored to its healthy exercise, and of others who balanced the removal of any amount of human suffering against the possible increase of a poor rate, for a time retarded the adoption, and has since attempted to harrass and perplex the execution of a remedy imperiously required by humanity and sanctioned by enlightened economy. The Board will no longer conceal that at every step they have encountered the opposition degenerated at last into personal hostility, of an active and untiring minority. That of this minority the gentlemen who were foremen of the two last Grand Juries form part, and the presentments of these Juries are but weak dilutions of the tirades, that for a time amused, until their repetition disgusted the Board.

The Grand Inquest for February, recommend "that all labor, nursing, and attendance, &c., that is required in and about the establishment should by all means, so far as is possible, be done by the inmates of the house." So far as it is possible, and at the same time *consistent with decency*, this at the present time is the practice. In but one department, that of the lunatic females, has pauper nursing and attendance to any extent been dispensed with, and the recommendation of the Grand Inquest can have no other meaning than that the Board should in this department return to the practice that formerly prevailed. It may be premised that pauper labor is little to be relied on, even with the most careful and continued supervision, and for nursing and attention

to the sick, should not be employed. It is true that poverty, disease, age and decrepitude, bring to the Alms House some who merit much better provision than public charity affords, but from these nurses and assistants can seldom be taken. The duties of these persons require health and strength to discharge, and they are necessarily taken from those who have been cured of diseases brought on by their own vile or vicious habits. These for the most part are persons whose companions are the most abandoned, whose haunts are the most degraded, and whose lives are about equally spent between those haunts, the alms house and the prison. They are detained against their will, they work reluctantly without hire, they are insensible to praise, and have no fear of punishment. They perform no labor which they can avoid, and do nothing right that is easier to do wrong.

The female lunatic department was formerly under the charge of a male superintendent, assisted by two male paupers, from the class above described, who dwelt and slept among the female patients, and by several female paupers, perhaps still more degraded and abandoned than the men. The duties of the men were, among the most violent of the patients, who destroyed their clothing and stripped naked their persons, and whose ablutions when performed were done by these men. Some of these patients, even in their madness, shrunk from this rude handling, and raved with increased fury at their indecent exposure. Revolting to decency as this practice was, it was not without difficulty, and only by degrees, that it was abandoned. At present no males are employed in the female lunatic asylum. The patients are classified, having a hired



female superintendent over each division with female inmates of the house as assistants. The substitution of these paid female superintendents for male paupers, to take care of these wretched and helpless women, is what the Grand Jury desire should be abolished, and upon the ground of economy recommend that paupers should again be employed as the only nurses and attendants. Even on this ground the Grand Jury are mistaken. The whole increase of salary consequent upon the change is six hundred and fifty dollars per annum, which is more than compensated for by the saving from waste, destruction and plunder of pauper labor, with imperfect supervision. We must assure the Grand Jury that we cannot adopt their recommendation. If the public desire a return to the former barbarous management of this department they must procure other agents if they can, for the accomplishment of their desire. We do not believe, however, that even among the members of this Grand Jury, who have been so imposed on, more than one can be found willing to aid them.

The Grand Inquest for February "was much surprised at seeing so great a number of strong, healthy and able persons of both sexes, without employment, idly lounging away their time throughout the premises."

In reply to a resolution of the Board, calling upon the Steward for information on this subject, he makes report:—"that there are very few able-bodied men in the institution. Persons not intimately acquainted with the inmates, would, upon casual observation, suppose that there were many such, but upon a close examination, it will be found that nearly all are afflicted in some way or other." Also, that "the cooks, bakers, butchers,

woodmen, coalcarriers, messengers, ward keepers, assistants, &c., all have their several duties to perform, which does not occupy their whole time, yet so much of it as to prevent them from being engaged in any thing else; when their work is done they assemble in groups in different places." This also leads to the impression on the minds of such casual observers as the members of the Grand Inquest, that they are a number of healthy and able persons unemployed. It is but justice, however, to remark, that the Jury visited at a season of the year when the house is crowded with the most improvident, if not the most vicious, who seek a shelter from the winter. But very few of them are acquainted with any mechanical occupation at which they can be engaged, and at that season of the year it is difficult to find continuous employment for such a number upon the farm and grounds. This also may have contributed to lead the Jury into the error of saying that there are a great number of able-bodied persons unemployed. All persons, however, able to work, are provided with employment suitable to their condition. That which is the most profitable or useful to the institution is of course selected. If the ability or condition of the pauper does not qualify him for any such employment, then the least expensive is resorted to, and rather than suffer any to be idle, they are put to picking oakum, of which this very Grand Jury complain. The Steward appends to his report a list of the names of all the male paupers in the house, with a statement of their several conditions and employments.



From this it appears that there were at the Male paupers.  
time in the institution - - - - 756

Of these, as patients in the Hospital, Lunatic  
Asylum, and incurable wards, - 449

There were in these departments as  
nurses, assistants, &c., - - - 67

Or nearly five-sevenths of the whole, ——— 516

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240

Of this balance there were employed as

Farmers,	-	-	-	-	27
Gardeners,	-	-	-	-	16
Carpenters,	-	-	-	-	8
Coopers,	-	-	-	-	2
Saddler,	-	-	-	-	1
Soapboilers,	-	-	-	-	4
Shoemakers,	-	-	-	-	14
Tailors,	-	-	-	-	8
Weaving, Winding, &c.,	-	-	-	-	17
Cabinet makers,	-	-	-	-	3
Painters,	-	-	-	-	3
Smiths,	-	-	-	-	6
Engineer,	-	-	-	-	1
Mason,	-	-	-	-	1
Bricklayer,	-	-	-	-	1
Sawyers,	-	-	-	-	3
Bakers,	-	-	-	-	3
Butchers,	-	-	-	-	3
Firemen,	-	-	-	-	4
Turner,	-	-	-	-	1
Oakum pickers,	-	-	-	-	18
Scavengers,	-	-	-	-	7

Labourers, - - - - 11

The balance are variously and usefully employed in the stores, warehouses, kitchens and stables, and at the gates, grave yard and ferry, - - - - 78

The Guardians may here be permitted to remark, that if the foreman of this jury, who is also a Guardian of the Poor, and sworn or affirmed diligently to perform his duty as a Guardian, knew or believed that the presentment, written by himself, in this particular was true, his obvious duty was to have brought the matter before the attention of the Board, who alone could rectify the abuse, if any existed. Since the publication of the presentment, the Board has, by resolution, in a most respectful manner, and with perfect sincerity, requested him to submit a plan of a more economical government of the institution, and of a more profitable employment of the labor of its inmates. From want of leisure, disposition or ability, he has not complied with this request. The Guardians believe that the Grand Inquest for April had been imposed on, when they say from facts which came to their knowledge, "they are convinced that persons in the cells (for punishment,) suffer for want of medical attendance." It seems strange that such facts should have come to their knowledge during one short visit, and yet have entirely escaped the observation of the Guardians, who either as a Board or in Committees, are at the Alms House three times in each week. The Guardians have no doubt that these pretended facts are the allegations of the foreman of the Jury, which had been faithfully investigated by the Board, and ascertained to have no other foundation than his



implacable hostility to an officer of the institution, by whose suggestion, and under whose direction many of the most humane and important improvements have been accomplished. A conclusion the Grand Jury would have arrived at, had they the means and opportunity of making an investigation.

The Board of Guardians would be gratified by, and invite the attendance of the municipal authorities of the City and Districts embraced in the Corporation, and of all citizens who feel an interest in the many difficult, onerous, and important matters committed to the management of the Board.

Published by order of the Board,

WILLIAM G. FLANAGAN, *President.*

SAMUEL J. ROBBINS, *Secretary*







